DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 294 569 IR 013 236

AUTHOR	Cambre, Marjorie A.; Zugner, Lisa Crooks
TITLE	A Reappraisal of Instructional Television. ERIC Digest.
INSTITUTION	ERIC Clearinghouse on Information Resources, Syracuse, N.Y.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	Dec 87
CONTRACT	400-85-0001
NOTE	3p.; This digest is based on "A Reappraisal of Instructional Television" by Marjorie A. Cambre (Syracuse, NY: ERIC Clearinghouse on Information Resources, 1987).
AVAILABLE FROM	ERIC/IR, 030 Huntington Hall, Syracuse, NY 13244-2340 (free while supply lasts).
PUB TYPE	Information Analyses - ERIC Information Analysis Products (071)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Educational Television; Elementary Secondary Education; Evaluation Methods; Futures (of Society); *Television Research
IDENTIFIERS	ERIC Digests; ITV Futures Planning Group

ABSTRACT

The role of instructional television (ITV) in elementary and secondary education is assessed, beginning with an overview of the history of the medium from the first experimental educational broadcasts in 1933 to the present. Research in the area is reviewed, and three primary methods of evaluation are identified: (1) basic research, which measures the effects of a medium or its varied aspects on an intended audience; (2) formative evaluation, which is intended specifically to assist those responsible for the creation of new program material; and (3) impact studies, which analyze the effectiveness of programs or series after a period of actual use. ITV issues for the future and the activities of the ITV Futures Planning Group are also discussed. (12 references) (MES)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED294569

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ERIC Clearinghouse on Information

Syracuse University
School of Education • School of Information Studies
030 Huntington Hall
Syracuse, New York 13244-2340
(315) 423-3640

ERIC DIGEST

A REAPPRAISAL OF INSTRUCTIONAL TELEVISION

After almost 30 years of use in American elementary and secondary schools, instructional television (ITV) is still considered an experiment by some educators and researchers and has been completely dismissed by others as education's "failed medium." Especially in recent years, with the great upsurge in classroom computer usage, ITV appears to have taken a back seat in perceived importance and impact within the educational structure.

Has this really occurred? Has ITV, as suggested by William Winn (1987), "failed to live up to its expectations"? Where is it, or should it be, headed? Perhaps a reassessment of its role to date, through an examination of its history and the research conducted about this often-misunderstood educational tool, can offer some insight into its potential worth for the future.

Sharing its basic roots with the more familiar "public" or "educational" television, which is targeted to a multi-age audience in a home setting, ITV differs mainly in that it is designed to help students achieve "identified, specific learning goals under the administration and supervision of professional educators in a formally structured learning environment" (Sikes, 1980, p.19). As such, it is dependent upon the support and enthusiasm of both the educators who use it and the vast network of agencies, networks, and organizations that fund, produce, and distribute it.

History of the Medium

From the creation of the first experimental educational broadcasts in 1933 (Wood and Wylie, 1977) to the present, ITV has undergone significant changes in many areas including content, method of transmission, availability, and reputation. It has also grown from a state of local production and control to one of centralized administration and national coordination handled by a wide array of public and government interests.

First actively integrated into the classroom structure in the '50s and early '60s, ITV at that time was presented mainly as a "master teacher," supposedly a replacement for the regular classroom teacher in specified areas of study. Later, with the new availability of videotape, portable equipment and live broadcasts, the emphasis shifted to a "you are there"-type presentation, where the "real world" was brought to the classroom. The '70s brought more technically polished, curriculum-related programs to the classroom which were intended to expand on what was already being taught. By the late '70s, a "back to basics" movement saw ITV presenting opportunities for the application of basic skills to life situations. And now, in the '80s, with more programs and series available than ever before, the trend seems to be the presentation of learning materials in highly vivid dramatic and documentary formats, aided by state-of-the-art special effects which it is hoped can help reinforce learning by virtue of strong visual stimuli.

ITV depends upon a vast support structure for its continued use and growth. From one noncommercial television station in 1953 (Wood and Wylie, 1977), the system has grown to over 230 public licensees, and today there are over 380 ITV utilization specialists nationwide who provide a source of contact and information between ITV agencies and schools. Three regional agencies also provide support by coordinating and administering group buys of programs, arranging satellite and broadcast feeds, and providing forums for a professional exchange of ideas. And on a district and local level, media coordinators in great numbers handle the day-to-day work of making program schedules and materials available to teachers.

Research As Teacher

These activities and relevant others have been the focus of many research studies through the years as proponents of the medium seek to identify its strengths and weaknesses in the interest of improving ITV's contributions to education. One such quantitative evaluation, the *School Utilization Study* (Riccobono, 1985), was conducted to gather data regarding ITV availability, use, training, support, funding, and encouragement of use within a stratified, multi-stage sampling of districts, schools, and individual teachers. Another study, an equipment penetration study conducted by the Quality Education Data Company (Hayes, 1986), investigated microcomputer and VCR usage in schools. And a qualitative, Agency for Instructional Technologies-commissioned research effort, undertaken by author and journalist Robert Carlisle in 1987, resulted in a book entitled *Video at Work in American Schools*, which has offered much insight into how and why our nation's teachers actually put ITV to work in their classrooms.

A mixture of encouraging and disappointing findings seems to indicate that while ITV has shown much potential as an effective visual learning tool, it has to be nurtured further and given more support by the educational community in order to live up to the expectations and predictions such as those epitomized by the Educational Media Study Panel, which in 1961 stated that "the new media and devices now available to education hold as much promise for improvement of instruction as did the invention of the book" (*Educational Television*, 1962). Above all, the research results indicate a need for more realistic goals.

The three types of productive inquiry used most extensively to date in the evaluation of education and instructional television are (1) basic research, which measures the effects of a medium or its varied aspects on an intended audience; (2) formative evaluation, which is intended specifically to assist those responsible for the creation of new program material; and (3) impact studies, which analyze the effectiveness of programs or series after a period of actual use. Through these and other important methods of evaluation, much has been learned about ITV's value in the American classroom setting. However, many more questions in many more areas need to be asked in order to reach informed conclusions.

IR013236

Issues and Futures

Recognizing the need for increased investigation of the medium, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) convened a group of ITV practitioners in 1985 which became known as the ITV Futures Planning Group. Made up of CPB administrators, administrative officers of the three regional ITV networks, and directors of selected ITV operations at state and local levels, the group was charged with providing "a means of staffing the work necessary for systemwide consideration of issues facing learning technologies in the future" (ITV Futures Planning Group, 1985) and launched a five-year planning effort designed to plan directions for the future based on its findings.

Among the group's significant actions were (1) the identification of 23 specific ITV issues facing the future of learning technologies, 17 of which were addressed in issues papers; (2) publication of a report entitled *ITV Futures: The Next Step*, which arose from the findings of nine sub-groups, each concentrating on a specific area as defined by the Futures Planning Group and the learning technologies community at large; (3) a CPB mandate to the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) to revitalize public television's role in elementary and secondary education; and (4) the recommendation that a working group be established to set up new and better standards of excellence. The group also set forth a philosophy which stated in part that, due to a shortage of teachers, parental insistence on the purchase of computers for schools, and public demand for more efficiency in schools, "the time has come once again to speak of technology replacing the teacher" (ITV Futures Planning Group, p. iii-3-4).

Major issue categories investigated by the ITV Futures Group were research and development, design, production, distribution, promotion, use, and measurement and evaluation. It is assumed and hoped that within the next few years, the learning technologies community will provide valuable feedback on these subject areas which will advance the understanding of ITV's potential significance even further.

It would appear that ITV has been the target of much criticism through the years in light of its inability to live up to the grandoise plans made by its creators. Although the medium has expanded and diversified along with the technology of the times, there is still much controversy as to how it should be presented and in what context it can best benefit the students to whom it is directed. And in many cases, its critics seem to feel that, since it has not proved to be an overwhelmingly successful answer to some of today's educational dilemmas, it is a failed medium.

However, an open-minded evaluation of available research data leads to the undeniable conclusion that while ITV is not a solution of Messianic proportions, it is a potentially valuable teaching tool, which, if given adequate support and attention, can be a worthy complement to the efforts of America's elementary and secondary school teachers both now and in the future.

Several factors are considered critical to ITV's future success. One of the most important is strong public relations to foster awareness in combination with vigorous advocacy lobbying efforts. Inservice training availability is also vital. The consideration of priorities, keeping in mind the importance of content as well as context, must be addressed.

Above all, lines of communication must be kept open between the creators and users of ITV so that the teaching/learning process will be recognized and respected as the primary and enduring focus of educational technology.

References

Cambre, Marjorie A. (1987). *A reappraisal of instructional television*. Syracuse, NY: ERIC Clearinghouse on Information Resources.

Carlisle, Robert D. B. (1987). *Video at work in American schools*. Bloomington, IN: Agency for Instructional Technologies.

Dorr, A. (1986). *Television and children: A special medium for a special audience*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.

Educational television: The next ten years. (1962). A report and summary of major studies on the problems and potentials of educational television, conducted under the auspices of the United States Office of Education. Stanford: The Institute for Communication Research.

Hayes, J. (Ed.). (1986). *Microcomputer and VCR usage in schools*. Denver: Quality Education Data.

It figures: A survey of users. (1984). Research Report #92. Bloomington, IN: Agency for Instructional Television. ED 249 975.

ITV Futures Planning Group (1985). *Learning technology issues for the future*. Unpublished monograph.

Riccobono, John A. (1985). *School utilization study: Availability, use, and support of instructional media. 1982-83 final report*. Washington, DC: Corporation for Public Broadcasting. ED 256 292.

Schramm, W., (Ed.) (1972) *Quality in instructional television. Honolulu, HI: University Press of Hawaii*.

Sikes, R. G. (1980). Programs for children: Public television in the 1970s. *Public Telecommunications Review*, 8(5), 7-26.

Wood, D. N. & Wylie, D. G. (1977). *Educational telecommunications*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc.

Winn, W. (1987). *Are media merely vehicles for instruction?* Paper presented at the annual convention of the Association for Educational Communications and Technology, Atlanta, GA. ED 285 523.

This digest based on *A Reappraisal of Instructional Television* by Marjorie A. Cambre (1987) was prepared for the ERIC Clearinghouse on Information Resources by Lisa Crooks Zugner, December 1987.

This publication was prepared with funding from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, under contract no. 400-85-0001. The opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of OERI or ED.